



## Greater Bridgeport Disability Advocates

Friday, February 22, 2013

Dear members of the Appropriations Subcommittee:

I am here today representing The Greater Bridgeport Disability Advocates where I volunteer my time as Senior Coordinator. The GBDA is an inclusive, cross disability advocacy collaborative with members representing a large range of disabilities. We are a volunteer group who work to inform, educate and advocate for people with disabilities and we are concerned over the complete elimination of State funding for Connecticut's Centers for Independent Living. We would like the appropriations committee to reconsider these cuts.

The Greater Bridgeport Disability Advocates was initially created by the Disability Resource Center of Fairfield County (DRCFC), but at this point our volunteer leaders make all of the major decisions and take on the responsibility for our meetings and activities. In spite of the fact that we are self guided, we are sponsored by the Disability Resource Center of Fairfield County and we rely on the center as a valuable resource for advice and information. The Center also aids our cause with material support by providing us with a phone extension, mail address, space for committee meetings, use of their copy machine, office supplies, access to email list, etc... Our ability to function effectively would be compromised if the DRCFC's budget is severely cut or eliminated. Some examples of our recent and current activities include:

- Monthly meetings with speakers to inform and educate on disability related issues
- Four members participating in *Partners in Policy Making* seminar
- Website with discussion board to provide news and dialogue on disability related issues
- Referrals, advice & mutual support
- Facilitated the introduction of *Powerful Tools for Caregivers* workshops into our area

Our collaborative is currently looking to the future. Over the next year we hope to expand our presence in the community through outreach, the creation of support groups, and the presentation of workshops. None of that will be possible without the support of The Disability Resource Center of Fairfield County. We are asking that you reconsider the elimination of funding for the Connecticut's independent living centers in the upcoming budget.

Thank you,

Tom DiMartino  
Senior Coordinator

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